

PURCHASE OF CERTAIN LAND OPPOSITE THE NORFOLK NAVY-YARD.

JANUARY 12, 1897.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. TATE, from the Committee on Naval Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany S. 1211.]

The Committee on Naval Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (S. 1211) authorizing and directing the Secretary of the Navy to contract for the purchase of a lot of land opposite the Norfolk Navy-Yard, have fully considered the same and recommend its passage for the reasons set forth in the report of the Senate committee accompanying said bill, which report is hereby adopted and made a part of this report.

A similar bill was reported favorably by Mr. Tyler from the Naval Committee of this House on the 2d of May, 1894, second session Fifty-third Congress, in which report the following language was used, which is made a part of this report:

The necessity of this property being owned by the Government becomes more apparent year after year, as the Navy increases in size and efficiency, and a corresponding increase in accommodations and facilities at the yards is demanded. For this property to pass into private hands for commercial purposes would seriously impair the usefulness of the Norfolk yard. Further delay in its purchase may either result in its loss to the Government altogether or, on account of the increasing value of such property in Norfolk and its vicinity, a larger appropriation than that proposed by this bill will be required.

[Senate Report No. 313. Fifty-fourth Congress, first session.]

The Committee on Naval Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (S. 1211) authorizing and directing the Secretary of the Navy to contract for the purchase of a lot of land opposite to the Gosport Navy-Yard, having had the same under consideration, beg leave to submit the following report:

The committee recommend the passage of the bill for the reasons stated in the letters of the Acting Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, as follows:

NAVY DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 23, 1896.

SIR: Referring to the bill (S. 1211) authorizing and directing the Secretary of the Navy to contract for the purchase of a lot of land opposite to the Gosport Navy-Yard, I have the honor to inform you that said bill having been referred to the Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, that officer returned the same with the following indorsement:

"Numerous boards of officers have, since 1857, recommended the purchase of this property at this the second yard in importance on the Atlantic Coast. The channel of Elizabeth River between the navy-yard and the port warden's line on Cedar Grove side is only 600 feet in width, which is entirely too narrow for the safe handling of the larger vessels that are now sent to this yard, and should this property be

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bought for business purposes the improvements would necessarily include wharves, which, with the vessels at them, would render the channel very difficult of navigation, as the large ships would not have room to turn.

"The purchase of this property would enable the Government to increase its dockage room within the port warden's line, a thing much to be desired.

"It would be to the best interests of the Government to purchase this property at this time."

The Department, concurring in the above views of the Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, recommends the within bill to the favorable consideration of the committee.

Very respectfully,

W. MCADOO, *Acting Secretary.*

The CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON NAVAL AFFAIRS,
United States Senate.

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY,
Washington, D. C., February 8, 1896.

SIR: In reply to Senator Bacon's request to be furnished with a statement of the efforts made by the Navy Department to acquire land opposite the navy-yard, Norfolk, Va. (now known as Cedar Grove), would state that on March 5, 1892, Secretary Tracy, in reply to an inquiry from Senator Butler, of the Naval Committee, inclosing bill S. 1543, said: "The acquisition by the United States of the land described in said bill has been repeatedly recommended by officers of the Navy charged with the duty of investigating and reporting upon the subject, and its purchase for navy-yard purposes in connection with the navy-yard at Norfolk, Va., is undoubtedly desirable, and will ultimately become essential. Its possession is not essential at the present time, and whether said land should be purchased this year or whether its purchase should be postponed until a later date is a matter for the determination of Congress."

The bill of Senator Butler, appropriating \$200,000 for this purchase, passed the Senate April 22, 1892. This same bill (S. 1543, Fifty-second Congress) was reported to the House January 13, 1893, by Mr. Cummings, from the Committee on Naval Affairs, with an amendment reducing the amount to be appropriated to \$150,000.

This report of Mr. Cummings goes on to say:

"The land it is purposed to purchase is on the southern branch of the Elizabeth River, opposite the Gosport Navy-Yard. The width of the river to the port warden's line at that place is 600 feet. United States vessels awaiting repairs and refitting are frequently moored in the river opposite the navy-yard, impeding commerce and at times rendering navigation dangerous. The obstruction will become greater if the river is filled to the warden's line and manufactories or warehouses are built thereon. Indeed, it would be almost impossible to launch a vessel within the 600 feet. There is hardly room to turn one around.

"By purchasing the property the water area could be greatly widened and vessels that now anchor in the main channel be provided with an anchorage inside of the warden's line, where they would not obstruct and endanger navigation. Aside from this, the property, if acquired by the Government, would be of great use in the construction of a wet dock, of wharves, and for other purposes.

"The purchase has been recommended by different boards appointed by the Secretary of the Navy to investigate the matter. The first board submitted its report on September 14, 1857. After detailing the result of its investigations it made the following recommendation:

"In view of these facts and the consideration herein presented, we recommend as a means for the accommodation of Government ships in ordinary, and for other advantages tending to the improvement of this station, the purchase of such a portion of the lands and shore opposite to the navy-yard, and in the vicinity of the lands already owned and improved at St. Helena, as may be necessary for the purpose." * * *

"The Naval Committee of the Forty-sixth Congress adopted a resolution unanimously requesting the Appropriations Committee to make an appropriation in the sundry civil bill to enable the Navy Department to buy the property.

"In the Forty-seventh Congress the Committee on Naval Affairs reported a bill to the House providing for its purchase. After detailing the unanimous testimony of the different naval boards for twenty years, boards composed of the most distinguished officers in the naval service, the report said:

"Bearing in mind the rapidly increasing demands for water fronts for commercial and business purposes, at the same time taking into consideration the rapid development of Norfolk as a port for direct exportation of cotton—now the third in importance in the country—which presages an increased demand for wharf property that

may at any time deprive the Government of the opportunity to purchase this property, in addition to which there is also the constantly increasing volume of interstate commerce passing through this channel, and, above all, appreciating the importance of the Norfolk Navy-Yard as a yard to which vessels have free access at all seasons of the year, and at which point work can be done with comfort all the year round, and believing that the requirements of this important naval station demand the purchase of this property, at the same time finding the price demanded is below that recently obtained for similar water fronts in the immediate vicinity, we recommend the passage of the bill as reported.

"What is true then is true now. The development of Norfolk and the steady increase in its commerce are enhancing the demand for wharf property, and unless the Government takes some steps for the purchase of this land its increasing value will necessitate a much larger appropriation.

"Your committee report the bill to the House as amended and recommend its passage."

On December 12, 1894, another board was appointed with a view to deciding upon some basis of exchange of such parts of the St. Helena property adjoining the Cedar Grove property as are not needed for Government purposes for such of the Cedar Grove property as it was most desirable to obtain possession of. But the owners were not then empowered to enter into any terms of exchange.

In the naval appropriation bill approved March 2, 1895, was a paragraph under the head of "Public works, Bureau of Yards and Docks, navy-yards and stations," and subhead, "Navy-yard, Norfolk, Virginia."

"The Secretary of the Navy is hereby authorized to exchange such of the land at the navy-yard, Norfolk, Virginia, being a part of a tract known as Saint Helena (on the east side of the Elizabeth River), which the Government does not need, for a part of the adjoining tract, known as 'Cedar Grove,' and now belonging to private parties, upon such terms as may be determined upon by a board of officers, accepted by the present owners of Cedar Grove, and approved by them, as may in his opinion serve the best interests of the Government."

Another board was accordingly appointed to appraise the value of such of the St. Helena property as they thought it would be to the best interests of the Government to exchange for "Cedar Grove" property, but the owners of the "Cedar Grove" were not willing to accept the appraised value put upon the St. Helena property, so the negotiation ended. This board, however, considered \$150,000 as a fair valuation of the Cedar Grove property.

Respectfully submitted.

E. O. MATTHEWS,
Chief of Bureau Yards and Docks.

The SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

